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ABSTRACT

Students in a senior (grade 12) basic English class were not motivated to read books unless required to do so by their teacher; they did little or no reading for pleasure. To increase recreational reading and instill a love of reading in the 17 subjects, a practicum, in the form of a reading program lasting about 2 months, developed strategies that included student involvement in the reading program, provision of young adult books, encouragement to read in new genres, sustained silent reading, student use of computers, and introduction to public library resources. Students: (1) participated in the development of book selection criteria; (2) chose their own books; (3) created materials to promote peer reading; and (4) evaluated their own reading progress. Although expected outcomes were achieved, a longer implementation period (one full year) is recommended. (Contains 26 references; appended are evaluative instruments, sample worksheets, and a suggested reading list of young adult books). (NKA)

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ED 376 497

Using Young Adult Literature to Promote Recreational Reading in a Senior Basic English Class

by

Mitzi K. Burden

Cluster 59

A Practicum I Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University

1994

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Jacky R. Stamps

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This practicum report was submitted by Mitzi Burden under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

Aug. 22, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Wm. W. Anderson
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ABSTRACT

Using Young Adult Literature to Promote Recreational Reading in a Senior Basic English Class. Burden, Mitzi K., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University. Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. English/ Secondary Education/Computers/Reading/Teachers

Students in a senior basic English class were not motivated to read books unless required to do so by their teacher; they did little or no reading for pleasure. More recreational reading by the students was desired, to instill a love of reading.

Solution strategies included student involvement in their reading program, provision of young adult titles, encouragement to read in new genres, sustained silent reading, student use of computers, and introduction to public library resources. Students participated in development of book selection criteria, chose their own books, created materials to promote peer reading, and evaluated their own reading progress. Expected outcomes were achieved, but a longer implementation period is recommended.

Appended are evaluative instruments, sample worksheets and a suggested reading list compiled by the writer.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The community is located in a small town (population 26,184) in the foothills of a mountain chain, in the southeastern portion of the United States. The economy of the area has in recent years made a successful transition from the failing textile market to other industries, chiefly fiberglass and chemical plants.

There is an illiteracy rate of 29.4% in the county.

The local school district comprises three high, three middle, and nine elementary schools. A recently completed building program has ensured uniform facilities throughout the system. The planning phase of a restructuring program has been completed, and targeted first-year strategies are now being initiated. School attendance zones govern enrollment at all district schools except one - a comprehensive high school and career center, which is a school of choice for students living in the two traditional high schools' attendance zones. This school provides the practicum setting.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's work setting is the media center of a comprehensive high school located in a lower socioeconomic section of town. A full range of academic courses is offered, and special education classes serve mentally handicapped and hearing impaired students. Several school programs address the needs of students at risk of dropping out of school before graduation.

Although the school's academic program includes honors and advanced placement courses, most collegebound students attend one of the traditional high schools. Students who plan to enroll at a nearby two-year technical college often attend the comprehensive school.

Enrollment is over 650 at the beginning of a typical school year, but decreases substantially by year's end. The 618 students currently enrolled exhibit diversity in learning styles, academic ability and interests. Many students are from socioeconomically disadvantaged families. Many are growing up in families made dysfunctional by parental separation or divorce, drug abuse or physical violence. In these troubled families, little encouragement is given children to develop good study habits or to be achievers in school. Three constant school concerns are the attendance rate, the dropout rate, and the high incidence of student pregnancy.

The faculty comprises forty-four academic and

vocational teachers, three administrators, and twenty-one staff workers.

The subjects of the proposed practicum are 17 students enrolled in a twelfth grade basic English class. Inability to read well is a characteristic of the class, in addition to lack of motivation. Absenteeism is common. The class is composed of seven girls and ten boys, ranging in age from 17 to 20 years. Two girls in the class have young children. One girl and one boy in the class are hearing impaired, and during the school day must be accompanied by a teacher or aide who signs lessons.

Although none of the 17 students had met the reading standard by the end of their junior year, several have since done so. Those who have not will take the exit examination again in April, 1994.

The students will shortly graduate or receive certificates documenting twelve years of school attendance. Following this school term, the students who fail to meet requirements for high school graduation will enter an adult education program or give up on education.

It is the responsibility of the writer, the school media specialist, to teach reference and catalog search skills to the senior basic English students, to provide individual assistance in locating materials, and to offer reading guidance when they go to the media center.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Prior to this school year, a state mandated program provided a reading teacher and computer-assisted instruction for students in need of remediation. The primary purpose of the program was to assist students in passing the reading and writing sections of the state exit examination. However, the teacher also read to the class, took the students to the media center, and encouraged students to read for pleasure. With the loss of a reading teacher, most students with poor reading skills are not going to the media center, and therefore are neither receiving reading guidance nor examining reading materials.

Little school time remains in which to encourage a change in student attitudes toward recreational reading. The basic English teacher must cover a specified course of study with the students, and cannot devote much time to the promotion of leisure reading. Although group reading of books takes place in the classroom as part of the curriculum, to date few students have exhibited an interest in reading for pleasure.

All students may go to the media center during study

hall periods to browse, read, or check out books. The basic English students do not often do so.

In short, the problem is that students in the basic English class are not motivated to read books unless required to do so by their teacher; they do little or no reading for pleasure. More recreational reading by these students is desired, to instill a love of reading.

Problem Documentation

Media center circulation records for the past month indicate that only one of the 17 students enrolled in the class checked out books during the month. Only four students have checked out books this year. Two girls have checked out one book each; one girl (hearing impaired) has checked out seven books. One boy (hearing impaired) has checked out two books.

Results of a reading interest inventory given to 16 students in the basic English class indicate that five students never enjoy reading, 11 enjoy reading sometimes, and none enjoy reading often. When completing the sentence, "I think reading is _____", four students gave answers indicating enjoyment; and when asked why they read books, four indicated they read for enjoyment. Five students indicated they read because they have to for school, six read to kill time, and one doesn't usually read at all.

Inventory results indicated that nine of the 16

students obtain most of their books from the school library; only one student obtains them from the public library. Other sources, each listed by one student, were church, newspaper stand, grocery store, and bookstore.

Three students named favorite authors, one student specified "deaf author", eight students indicated no favorite author, and four students did not respond.

Among responses indicating favorite books, two titles given by students are books frequently read by elementary teachers to their classes, and one is read in the English class; eight students indicated they have no favorite book, and one student did not respond. Similar responses were given as "best books read in the last year", with seven students reporting no best book; one student couldn't remember the title, and one student did not respond. "Other books read" elicited similar responses, with four students reporting no other books read; two students did not respond.

Ten students reported they never discuss books they read with friends or family; four do so sometimes; two often discuss them.

Sports books were chosen as the type of book liked best, followed by adventure and humor. Least liked were science, poetry, nature and historical fiction.

Responding to "Some books and magazines I own are _____", six students indicated they have sports magazines and four indicated they have car magazines. No responses

indicated book ownership.

Additions to the public library suggested by students included black history books, magazines, more books about deafness, and computers.

Nine students indicated they read newspapers often, six sometimes, and only one never. Sports information is read by 13 students, classified advertisements by eight, local news by three, "the funnies" by two, crime reports by two, and the obituary page by two.

Causative Analysis

Lack of interest in recreational reading may be caused by (a) failure of parents and teachers to model reading for pleasure, (b) poor reading skills that make reading difficult and uninteresting, and (c) lack of student awareness of titles that might appeal to reading interests.

Many of the 17 students in the class apparently do not read at all for pleasure. It is reasonable to assume that these students have not had role models to emulate, at home or at school.

All 17 students in the basic English class have experienced reading difficulty. Their placement in a basic level course is the result of failure to meet reading competency standards set by the state.

Many of the 17 students go to the media center only with classes carrying out research assignments. These

students may not notice book displays while there, and may not know that current young adult fiction exists.

It is possible that all of the above reasons may be causative factors in the basic English students' avoidance of books for leisure reading.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Attitudes about reading are formed by experiences. Children must be read to, and must see parents and teachers reading, to learn to value reading themselves (Turner, 1992). Ideally, every child would be read to by loving parents, and grow up surrounded by books. In reality, many children have not had pleasurable experiences with reading, and are therefore unaware of the enjoyment to be found in books. When recreational reading must compete with television viewing, reading faces an additional hurdle (Dymock, 1993; Trelease, 1982).

The importance of the role of parents and teachers in forming attitudes toward reading cannot be underestimated (Lesesne, 1991; Trelease, 1982). Peers who enjoy reading also serve as role models (Atwell, 1986), as do book characters (Turner, 1992).

Reading promotes vocabulary growth, which has a reciprocal relationship with reading achievement. Children who have good reading skills read more, learn new words, and develop better skills; students who have poor skills

typically dislike reading, read less, learn fewer new words, and fall farther behind in skill development (Stanovich, 1986).

Inability to read well may cause students to lose interest in reading (Dymock, 1993; Turner, 1992), and to develop low self-esteem (McGowan, 1990). At this point students may stop trying to learn at all (Atwell, 1986; Marlow, 1992). However, rapport between teacher and student may improve students' self-esteem, and help to change negative attitudes toward reading (McGowan, 1990).

Motivation to read may be achieved by allowing students to participate in evaluation of their reading program (Hoffman, 1992), or in evaluation of their own reading progress (Ediger, 1993; Hoffman, 1992). As students begin to read more, their skills increase, and reading becomes more enjoyable. Grimes (1991) found that, once they begin to find reading rewarding, students with poor reading skills are as likely as better readers to read widely and often.

Young adults with low reading skills have the same general characteristics as their peers who read well. To encourage recreational reading by all young adults, a variety of books appropriate to their needs, interests, and maturation levels must be offered (Atwood, 1986; Carlsen, 1967; Gebhard, 1993; Lesesne, 1991; Shuman, 1993; Trelease, 1982).

At a time when they are searching for personal

direction, adolescents enjoy reading about characters who are also in transition (Carlsen, 1967), and are motivated to read by fictional characters who are facing problems similar to their own (Carlsen, 1967; Grimes, 1991; Shuman, 1993). Young African Americans need believable book characters with whom to identify (Gebhard, 1993), and girls need to read about female protagonists who overcome obstacles to find meaning for their lives (Endicott, 1992). Such characters are found in current young adult fiction. When students are allowed to select books from this genre, they experience increased reading enjoyment (Grimes, 1991; Lesesne,1991).

Recreational reading may be encouraged at school by activities such as sustained silent reading (Trelease, 1982) and book discussions (Lesesne, 1991; Tonjes, 1991).

Writing activities also encourage wider reading by adolescents (Atwell,1986; Bushman, 1993; Ediger, 1993; Hancock, 1993; Turner, 1992). Use of computers provides variety in written assignments (Turner, 1992) and elicits better student written work (Courtney, 1993; Pinson, 1993; Rivard, 1991). Because working at a computer is perceived by many students as playing (Courtney, 1993), students who use computers for writing complete their assignments more willingly.

Calloway (1981) found that commonly used tactics motivate some students and alienate others; therefore, a variety of strategies should be used to encourage more

recreational reading by the basic English students.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENT

The following goal and expected outcomes were projected for this practicum:

Goal and Expectations

Increased recreational reading by senior basic English students is the desired goal.

Expected Outcomes

Five outcomes are expected by the end of the implementation period.

Expected outcomes are (a) ability to use selection criteria in choosing books, (b) increased voluntary reading of books, (c) increased reading enjoyment, (d) reading in genres not previously explored, and (e) self-reported preference for reading over other activities.

The first expected outcome is that students will use selection criteria in choosing books. As observed by the writer, the students do not read information on catalog cards or book jackets, or browse before selecting books to judge textual content, readability or interest.

The second expected outcome is increased voluntary

reading of books. Very little leisure reading is currently taking place among the basic English students.

The third expected outcome is increased reading enjoyment. Students in the basic English class do not share reading enjoyment in traditional ways, such as book talks or creative expression intended to stimulate interest in reading. Student creation of written materials or artwork to promote reading will be considered indicative of reading enjoyment.

The fourth expected outcome is reading in genres not previously explored. The basic English students tend to continue reading the same types of books they read in elementary grades.

The fifth expected outcome is increased expressions of reading for pleasure, as indicated by self-reported preference for reading over other activities. Currently only one of the students reads more than thirty minutes a day other than for school assignments, and 6 do not read at all except for school requirements.

Measurement of Outcomes

An evaluation will be conducted to determine whether the following projected outcomes have been achieved:

1. By the end of the implementation period there will be increased student use of selection criteria to choose books, as observed and recorded by the writer on individual

student appraisal forms (see Appendix B) showing at least 12 of the 17 students demonstrated appropriate selection techniques.

2. By the end of the implementation period there will be increased voluntary reading, as indicated by a review of the media center attendance records showing at least 7 of the 17 senior basic English students visited the media center twice per week.

3. By the end of the implementation period there will be increased reading enjoyment, as demonstrated by production of artwork or written materials to promote reading by at least 7 of the 17 students.

4. By the end of the implementation period there will be increased reading in previously unexplored genres, as reported by students on a reading self-evaluation form (see Appendix C) showing at least four students checked out books in genres new to them.

5. By the end of the implementation period there will be an increase in student expressions of reading for pleasure, as shown by at least four students indicating on a reading self-evaluation form (see Appendix C) that they would choose reading in preference to other leisure-time activities.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem to be addressed by this practicum was that students in a senior basic English class were not motivated to read books unless required to do so by their teacher. They did little or no reading for pleasure.

More recreational reading by these students was desired, to instill a love of reading.

The following possible solutions were found in the literature:

1. Grimes (1991) and Lesesne (1991) suggest that students be allowed to make their selection of books from current young adult titles, in order to provide fictional characters with whom they may identify.

2. Sustained silent reading is recommended (Trelease, 1982) to provide a quiet time for students to develop an interest in reading and to read without distractions.

3. Class sharing of information (Grimes, 1991; Lesesne, 1991; Tonjes, 1991) has been a successful method of promoting interest in reading and encouraging student response to reading.

4. Student involvement in development and evaluation

of the reading program and self-evaluation of reading progress (Hoffman, 1992) are suggested ways to increase student self-esteem and encourage reading practice.

5. Use of student journals or logs (Bushman, 1993; Hancock,1993; Hoffman, 1992) is recommended as a method of encouraging self-expression and response to reading.

6. Student use of computers for written work (Courtney, 1993; Pinson, 1993; Rivard, 1991; Turner, 1992) is reported to provide reading incentive.

Ideas generated by a review of the literature follow:

1. The literature speaks to the desirability of student involvement in the reading program, in order to foster a sense of ownership (Hoffman, 1992). Student participation could be sought in developing book selection criteria, deemed by the writer to be important as a guide in individual book selection. Students could also be encouraged to participate in making other decisions related to their reading program.

2. Computers could be used for production of artwork and written materials by students after reading books. Using computers, regarded by students as playing (Courtney, 1993), would be a motivational tool to encourage students to finish reading books.

3. In the hope that students might want to continue reading for pleasure after leaving school, a bridge could be provided from the school book collection to that of the

public library. Students with low reading ability who find enjoyment in reading may wish to continue reading often (Grimes, 1991).

Description of Selected Solution

After evaluation of the solutions suggested in the literature, a decision was made by the writer to use a variety of strategies to meet the unique needs of students in the basic English class.

The selected solution strategies included (a) student involvement in their reading program, (b) provision of young adult titles, (c) encouragement to read in new genres, (d) sustained silent reading, and (e) student use of computers. Following is a description of each, and justification for its use:

Student involvement in their reading program

Decisions regarding the reading program in the basic English class were made by the teacher, who selected books from a grade level specific reading list. Classroom collections of paperback books were used for group reading; therefore, many students never went to the media center at all. Evaluation of student progress was done entirely by the teacher.

Hoffman (1992) found that students who have a voice in developing and evaluating their reading program and in evaluating their own reading progress are more likely to

exhibit interest in reading. Therefore, the basic English students were to be invited to participate in the development of book selection criteria, in setting rules to follow during the implementation period, and in self-evaluation of their reading progress, in addition to selecting the books they would read.

Development of book selection criteria. Students in the basic English class did not exhibit classic behaviors associated with ability to select appropriate reading materials. Therefore, a class activity was planned in which students would participate in developing selection criteria to be used as a guide in individual book selection. Student behavior in the media center was then to be observed by the writer, using an individual student appraisal form (see Appendix B).

Student participation in setting rules and solving problems. Students were to help decide on rules for individual and whole class activities, to increase their sense of ownership in their reading program. They were also to help find solutions, should problems develop during the implementation period.

Student self-evaluation and response to reading. To encourage reading improvement and increase self-esteem, students were to be asked to evaluate their own reading

progress. Using their responses to reading interest inventory questions as a starting point, students were to be asked to monitor their reading progress and record their findings. Students were to be asked to respond to their reading by writing their thoughts about book characters or events as they read. Students were not to be required to share subjective responses with the class.

Provision of current young adult titles

Young adult titles were to be provided because they offer adolescent characters and events that may be relevant to the lives of students. Reading interest inventory responses had indicated that the basic English students read newspaper and magazine articles, but rarely read books. Because they had exhibited little interest in ludic reading, a possibility existed that these students were unaware that young adult literature addresses the same type of problems they encounter in daily living. It was expected that exposure to young adult literature would result in increased reading of books for pleasure.

Encouragement to read in new genres

Following introduction of young adult fiction and initial selection of books, students were to be encouraged to read in genres not formerly explored. For book reports, the basic English students frequently chose books they remembered either reading or hearing read at the elementary

level. The students had indicated on a reading interest inventory that they had read in few genres.

Sustained silent reading

Sustained silent reading was to be instituted in the classroom and in the media center, to provide time for students to become interested in reading and to practice reading. Trelease (1982) considers this activity to be crucial in learning to enjoy reading for students in whose homes reading is not valued.

Student use of computers

One traditional method of expressing reading enjoyment is to create artwork depicting characters or events in books, to share with other students. Written materials are also often produced by students to encourage peer reading. Instruction in the use of word processing programs and a graphics program was to be provided so that computers might be used for this purpose. The writer expected the projected computer activities to provide student incentive to finish reading books, to provide an interesting way for students to respond to their reading, to provide a method for creative expression, and to encourage book-related student interaction.

Introduction to public library resources

Students were to explore the resources of the public

library. Activities were to include orientation, use of the computerized system to locate materials, and an introduction to the services available to them at the public library after they leave school. The two hearing impaired students were to learn about special services available to them. The students were to be encouraged to obtain library cards, and to pursue individual interests in selection of materials to check out. All students were to be invited to bring young family members to a story hour, and to check out books to read to the children.

Report of Action Taken

Prior to implementation, the proposal was first presented to the building principal, and then to the teacher of the senior basic English class, for approval. The principal readily understood the underlying concept and expressed enthusiasm for implementation of the practicum. The senior basic English teacher was quite interested in the proposed practicum. She agreed to allow a change in the students' reading program, and worked cooperatively with the writer in planning the schedule to be followed.

Prior to implementation in mid-April, 1994, a reading interest inventory was administered to sixteen of the seventeen students enrolled in the basic English class. Student responses on the inventory revealed little interest in reading for pleasure. The writer used responses on the

inventory as the basis for activities designed to motivate the students to read more.

The students in the senior basic English class were approached with the idea of choosing their own books for their current reading assignment from the young adult fiction collection in the media center. They were very interested in this departure from their prescribed reading program, which featured whole class reading of one novel.

The first activity invited student participation in the development of practical selection criteria to follow when deciding on a book to read (see Appendix A). Students shared their ideas on methods to use in book selection, and reached consensus on steps to take in choosing appropriate books. Copies of the selection criteria were distributed the following day, and students were thereafter expected to use these criteria in book selection.

The students were introduced to young adult fiction through a discussion of how it differs from other literature. Emphasis was placed on the fact that the book characters are young people who face problems currently encountered by many young people in their daily lives. Students who had read in the genre were invited to comment. Little response was received, but the students appeared interested.

Students then examined young adult titles displayed in the media center. Practicing use of selection criteria,

they selected and checked out books for their current class reading assignment.

Following initial selection of books during the first class session in the media center, students continued to browse and select or read books in the media center, as they went there individually from classes or study halls, during lunch periods, or out of school hours. The writer observed student behavior, noting activities engaged in and whether selection criteria were used when students selected and checked out books. Observations were recorded on individual student appraisal forms (see Appendix B).

During the second week of the implementation period, students were asked to think about ways that reading helps them in their daily lives; this elicited discussion on the subject of the importance of reading. Then students were asked to (a) look at their reading interest inventory responses, (b) decide whether reading more would be helpful to them, (c) think about their personal reading habits, and (d) write on a sheet of notebook paper how they felt about reading, whether they believed reading more would be helpful to them, and whether they planned to read more. This self-analysis became the first page of a reading log. Students were told that they would monitor their reading progress and would evaluate their own progress (see Appendix C).

On May 4, 1994, two and one-half weeks after the

implementation period began, the basic English class was taken on a field trip to the state capital, about one hundred miles away, to attend a Read-In, an annual celebration of reading. There the students heard an address in praise of reading delivered by the state superintendent of education, and saw groups of elementary and secondary students from across the state, all reading or discussing books. They heard eerie tales of the state's low country, told by a volunteer storyteller. On May 5, 1994, the class reviewed the previous day's experience and talked about ways to share reading with family members, especially children.

Sustained silent reading had been planned primarily as a classroom activity, with the teacher modeling reading. Only occasionally were the students to read in the media center, to experience reading quietly alongside students from study halls and other classes. However, because the students requested that they be allowed to read instead in the media center, it was decided by the teacher and the writer to hold the class there twice a week, with the teacher and the writer modeling reading. This was possible because the media center was not crowded during the period that the senior basic English class met.

During the fourth week of implementation, the class met in the computer lab for instruction to familiarize students with word processing and graphics programs for use with IBM

compatible and Apple computers. The original intent for computer use had been that students would first read a book and then, if they wanted to promote peer reading of the book, would use the network Q&A word processing program or the Printmaster graphics program for that purpose. All of the students had worked in remedial labs and had basic computer skills. They wanted to use their computer time to write answers to the questions on their next worksheet, and the writer discovered that they worked more willingly when using computers. Because the students considered their computer written paragraphs about book characters and events to be suitable for promotion of peer reading, the writer revoked the stipulation that only materials prepared after reading a book could be used for that purpose.

Students were to be encouraged to write in their logs anything they would like to say about the books they were reading, and were assured that they would not have to share anything they wrote with the class. However, the students appeared incapable of keeping reading logs; they had difficulty thinking and writing about their reading without having specific questions to answer. Therefore, at the suggestion of the teacher, daily worksheets (see Appendix D) were prepared, and thereafter students answered one or two questions related to the books they were reading or to their reading progress before most sustained silent reading sessions. Occasionally they wrote character

sketches. The writer included lines on which students recorded beginning and ending page numbers, to provide a simple method to assess growth in terms of increased reading. The worksheets became rudimentary logs.

The storyteller of the Read-In experience had been so well received by the basic students that she offered to come to the school to tell more stories to the class. A date was set, and the students read more pages and wrote in their logs more willingly in anticipation of her visit. Several students completed unfinished work at this time.

It had been planned that book discussions would take place whenever students felt comfortable talking about what they were reading. Sharing of reading experiences did not become a popular activity during the implementation period. Although students were willing to discuss their reading with the writer privately, they did not respond well in whole class discussion. The writer did not make an issue of student reluctance to share thoughts about book characters or reading.

Students were to be encouraged to read in new genres. It was evident at the outset of the implementation period that several students would participate in the reading program only on their own terms. One student read only biography; another wanted nothing but books about automobiles or sports. These students were allowed to to check out non-fiction books of their choice while the

other students made selections from young adult fiction. As students continued to read and select different titles, they were encouraged to sample a variety of genres.

As the school year drew to a close, class time on several occasions was devoted to discussions about reading enjoyment. Plans for future individual reading were briefly discussed and then written by students, as well as plans for sharing reading with others. Students were encouraged to become patrons of the public library and to continue reading there.

Results of the state exit examination were received on May 18, 1994, and six of the basic English students learned that they had again failed to meet state reading competency requirements. Absenteeism in the class increased, and one of the students stopped attending school.

The students were to evaluate their reading progress near the end of the implementation period, using a reading self-evaluation form (see Appendix C). The writer obtained evaluations from the students in the sixth week of the implementation period instead, in order to assure student evaluation before the end of the school year. Evaluations were obtained from eleven students May 26-27, and from four students on June 2, 1994.

In the eighth week of implementation, the class was to begin meeting at the public library so that students could become accustomed to reading periodicals there, and learn

more about services available to them as adults. The school year had ended, and students were not required to attend. Only two students who were enrolled in a work/study summer program at the school elected to continue. One of these students is hearing impaired; she already liked to read, although her reading skills are low.

The writer accompanied the students to the public library for a scheduled meeting with the young adult services librarian. The students were given a tour of the premises and were advised of services available to them.

During the next few weeks, the students attended a story hour and examined various types of books and other media. One student learned search techniques on the library's automated system. They examined special collections. One of the students, who was expecting a child in a few month's time, found books on child rearing. The students spent time reading in the library, and checked out books to read at home.

The writer decided that, because they had already completed self-evaluation along with other students at the end of the seventh week, the two students who participated for 12 weeks could write paragraphs evaluating the full program. This was done at the end of the tenth week.

The classroom teacher evaluated the program, noting effects of the program on students in terms of peer relationships, cooperativeness in completing assigned work,

willingness to read for a designated length of time, and self-confidence.

The writer evaluated the program using assessment criteria related to outcomes: individual student appraisal forms, media center attendance records and student reading self-evaluation forms.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

The practicum addressed the problem that students in the senior basic English class were not motivated to read books unless required to do so by their teacher; they did little or no reading for pleasure.

Solution strategies employed were 1) student involvement in their reading program, including participation in setting rules and solving problems, student self-evaluation and response to reading, and evaluation of their own reading progress; 2) provision of young adult titles; 3) encouragement to read in new genres; 4) sustained silent reading; 5) student use of computers; and 6) introduction to public library resources. Related planned activities included participation in an annual celebration of reading and attendance at a children's story hour.

The outcomes as projected prior to practicum implementation are listed below, followed by results that were documented as described. Outcomes were projected for 17 students. However, one student dropped out of school shortly after the implementation period began; 16 students participated in the program. One of these 16 stopped

attending school about a week before the end of the term, and did not complete a self-evaluation form. This student was included in outcome results that did not depend upon student self-evaluation forms.

Outcome #1. The first anticipated outcome was that there would be increased student use of selection criteria to choose books, as observed and recorded by the writer on individual student appraisal forms (see Appendix B) showing at least 12 of the 17 students demonstrated appropriate selection techniques. This outcome was achieved in that all 16 students participating in the program demonstrated appropriate selection techniques in book selection, as observed and recorded by the writer on individual student appraisal forms.

Outcome #2. The second expected outcome was that there would be increased voluntary reading, as indicated by a review of the media center attendance records showing at least 7 of the 17 senior basic English students visited the media center twice per week. This outcome was achieved in that 8 of the 16 participating students regularly visited the media center twice a week as documented by media center attendance records.

Outcome #3. The third projected outcome was that there would be increased reading enjoyment, as demonstrated by production of artwork or written materials to promote reading by at least 7 of the 17 students. This outcome was

achieved in that 8 of the 16 participating students produced artwork or written materials to promote peer reading.

Outcome #4. The fourth expected outcome was that there would be increased reading in previously unexplored genres, as reported by students on a reading self-evaluation form (see Appendix C) showing at least four students checked out books in genres new to them. This outcome was achieved in that 11 of the 15 students who evaluated their reading progress reported checking out books in genres new to them on a reading self-evaluation form.

Outcome #5. The fifth anticipated outcome was that there would be an increase in student expressions of reading for pleasure, as shown by at least four students indicating on a reading self-evaluation form (see Appendix C) that they would choose reading in preference to other leisure-time activities. This outcome was achieved in that five of the 15 students who evaluated their reading progress indicated on a reading self-evaluation form that they would choose reading in preference to other leisure-time activities.

All outcomes occurred as anticipated.

The two students who participated in the program for 12 weeks evaluated their reading for the second time at the end of the tenth week. Both reported that they had begun to spend more time reading, were enjoying reading more, would continue as public library patrons, and would share reading with others.

Teacher evaluation consisted of assessing effects of the young adult reading program on student peer relationships, cooperativeness in completing assigned work, willingness to read for a designated length of time, and self-confidence. Growth was noted in peer relationships, as shown by fewer class disruptions steming from student disagreements; more cooperativeness in completing assigned work was noted in all students, as shown by participation in worksheet activities; all students had improved in willingness to read for a designated length of time, as shown by increased length of sustained silent reading time; and growth in self-confidence, although minimal in several instances, was noted in all students, as shown by extent of involvement in their reading program.

Discussion

The students in the basic English class were mildly suspicious when offered a new type of reading program. The idea of choosing their own books was appealing, but initial interest soon flagged. They were still expected to read. Reading was hard work for most of the students - a chore required only in school, and one they considered to be of little personal benefit. Reading enjoyment was foreign to them, and they opened their books with little expectation of pleasure.

The students did enjoy, probably for the first time

ever, being "preferred customers" in the media center. So much so that they wanted their sustained silent reading sessions to take place there, rather than in the classroom. Most of the students desperately needed the increased reading comprehension to be gained from sustained silent reading (Atwell, 1986); therefore, in order to make reading more palatable to them, arrangements were made for the class to meet twice each week in the media center for that purpose. The students had become active participants in making decisions about their reading program.

Freedom to choose books and time in school to read are essential ingredients of a reading program that promotes student literacy and literature appreciation (Atwell, 1986). Although positive results were slowly achieved, lack of student motivation to read or to complete assigned school work characterized the basic English class. With the exception of three young people, the students simply were not motivated to do much of anything. The writer soon realized that the only way to motivate the students was to offer rewards or grades; as seniors, they were concerned about passing grades, although they exhibited little interest in schoolwork.

It was necessary to monitor the activities of the basic students closely to keep them on task, as illustrated by the following incident: Upon being assigned a computer to create book-related artwork, one student produced instead

a banner proclaiming her undying love ("4-life") for the young man whose child she would bear the following month.

The basic English students looked forward to promised events with childlike anticipation, and enjoyed them thoroughly. Following the Read-In experience, one boy wrote that he had never before been in a class that had done anything like that. Such was the rapport between the class and the storyteller that the latter expressed to the writer an interest in helping the students learn survival skills, and offered to talk to students during the public library phase of the practicum.

Young & Bastianelli (1990) found that by reading a few minutes, then writing about what they remember, remedial students can learn to trust their own ability to respond to reading and share opinions. The basic English students did not progress to this point; they did not overcome their initial reticence to discuss their reading in a group or their reluctance to share opinions about books. Given more time in the reading program, perhaps their self-confidence would have increased enough to allow sharing of ideas on reading.

Dailey (1988) believes that all remedial students have a corresponding writing disability, and suffer from a lack of self-confidence. The use of computers is recommended to encourage improvement in writing ability and increase self-confidence. The writer learned that the basic students

although not eager to answer questions, did so more willingly using computers. The class teacher considered computer use to be beneficial in building self-confidence.

During the course of the implementation period, the writer began to understand the frustration of students who are not able to read well after almost twelve years of school. Although disappointed that no more students were willing to participate in the reading program at the public library, the writer understood the students' refusal. They had found the new reading program to be more interesting than group reading of teacher selected novels, but they still considered any reading program to be undesirable when the alternative was no reading program at all. Ignoffo (1988) states that attitudes toward school change as students gain more confidence in themselves and become more responsible for their own progress. The basic students' deeply ingrained negative attitudes toward school had not changed enough to warrant voluntary participation in a reading program. However, some progress had been made, and it is reasonable to assume that more improvement would have taken place had the students continued in the program longer.

The two students who participated for the entire implementation period were able to express opinions about reading, in a very superficial way, after a close relationship with the writer had been established.

The reading experience with two students at the public library was personally rewarding to the writer, although it began with a shaky start. After being introduced to library resources and shown about by the young adult services librarian, the two students were invited to browse and find materials to check out. When they met the writer at the charging desk, it was evident that the highlight of the tour had been the movie collection; each girl had selected two movies to take home.

The second week the students checked out recipe books. Then, the third week, the writer was gratified to observe the girls looking for new books by authors whose works they had read in the school library. Success at last! By the end of the implementation period, the two students and the writer were going to the public library as old friends would, commenting on books and recommending titles to each other.

The writer believes that all basic English students should be offered this type of reading program instead of the traditional program, and would like to see it initiated below the high school level. Had the 16 senior basic English students who participated in the practicum been involved in such a program during their middle school years, it is unlikely that six of their number would have still been unable to meet state reading competency standards in the twelfth grade.

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Results of this practicum indicate that basic English students' reading enjoyment can be increased by allowing students to select their own books from young adult literature. Although it is possible to overcome negative attitudes toward reading at the high school level, positive results could probably be achieved more easily through implementation of the program at the middle school level, before negative attitudes toward reading have become deeply entrenched.

Recommendations

The writer strongly recommends a reading program for basic students that allows selection of their own books from realistic fiction. Student involvement in their own reading should be encouraged through participation in program development and self-evaluation of reading progress. Many opportunities for writing should be offered, employing student use of computers. The program should be initiated at the middle school level, in order to assist students to discover reading enjoyment at an early age.

It is recommended that the implementation period be no less than the length of one full school year.

Dissemination

Highlights of this practicum, along with the appended suggested basic English reading list (see Appendix E), will be presented to media specialists and English teachers who

serve on a young adult literature committee, for dissemination throughout the state. It will also be disseminated to members of two media specialist organizations.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SELECTION CRITERIA

SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Finding a book

First you must be sure you know how to locate a book. If you are using the card catalog, look up a subject you are interested in. Then read the brief information on the subject card to find out what is in the book. If you are interested, find the book on the shelf, using the call number in the upper left corner of the catalog card.

Use the following criteria to be sure you are choosing a book you will enjoy reading:

2. Selection Criteria for Fiction:

Is the author's style of writing pleasing?
Is the story told in an interesting way?
Does the story move along at a satisfying pace?
Does the plot of the story sound interesting?

If you are looking at a fiction book, read the brief information on the inside cover of the book jacket to learn something about the story. Take time to browse - read a few lines here and there in the book. Find out whether you like the style of writing, the way the story is told (first person or third person), and the rate at which events happen in the story. Don't read the ending! Decide whether you are interested enough to read the book.

3. Selection Criteria for Non-Fiction:

Does the book contain wanted information?
Is the information given in a way that is easily understood?
Is the writing style pleasing?
Is the subject interesting?

If you are examining a non-fiction book, read the information on the inside cover of the book jacket. Look at the table of contents to find out whether the book contains information that you want to read. Then browse to find out if the information is given in a way you understand and enjoy. Decide whether you want to read the book or just look for answers to questions you may have about the subject.

Note: After deciding on a book to read, check it out and find a place in the media center to begin reading your book.

APPENDIX B

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT APPRAISAL FORM

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT APPRAISAL

Student _____

Codes:

Book Activities		Computer Activities		Attendance	
S	Selection	W	Writing	1	class
B	Browsing	A	Artwork	2	study hall
R	Reading			3	lunch
C	Checkout			4	other

Date/Activities/Attendance Notes

APPENDIX C

READING SELF-EVALUATION FORM

Name_____

READING SELF-EVALUATION

Place a check beside statements that are true.

____I like to read.

____Reading is important to me.

____I have started reading more books for pleasure.

____I have read more than one book in the last three months.

____I plan to continue reading more.

____I used the computer to make materials to interest classmates in reading.

I read the following types of books that I had never read before:

____adventure	____science fiction	____poetry
____biography	____historical fiction	____history
____mystery	____fantasy	____nature
____romance	____sports	____travel

I plan to share reading with others by:

____reading stories to children

____talking about books with friends

I prefer reading instead of these activities:

____watching TV	____playing board games
____going to the mall with friends	____talking on the telephone with a friend
____listening to music	____going to a movie
____walking	____skating

____other (specify) _____

_____

APPENDIX D

DAILY WORKSHEETS

Name_____ Date_____

Beginning page number_____ Ending page number_____

Writing in the Computer Lab: Type your name first. Type the date.

Give the author and title of the book you are reading; tell how many pages are in the book, and the page number you are on now.

Describe one character in the story. (Give information such as name, appearance, age, work, etc.)

What problem does the character face in the story?

Do you think you know what is going to happen next in the story? What?

Do you know anyone with a problem like this in real life?

In a separate paragraph, tell how you feel about the amount of reading you are doing right now. Are you reading any more than you were before we began this project in Mrs. Pruitt's English class? Do you feel that reading more will make you a better reader? Will reading help you after you get out of school? If so, how?

READING LOG

Name_____ Date_____

Starting page no._____ Ending page no._____

BEFORE YOU READ TODAY:

Think about what is happening in the story you are reading. Is the main character acting as you would if the events in the story were happening to you?

_____

What would you have done differently? If you would have acted the same as the main character, explain why.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you read your book outside of class, how many pages did you read?

_____

READING LOG

Name_____ Date_____

Starting page no._____ Ending page no._____

Pick a character in the story that you either like or dislike. Write a short note to this person, expressing your thoughts about the person's actions in the story.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Number of pages read outside of class _____

APPENDIX E

BASIC ENGLISH READING LIST

Basic English Reading List

The attached reading list is suggested for use by basic English students.

The suggested titles are not intended as bibliotherapy for poor readers with problems. They are simply good books that basic English students will read, perhaps because they can identify with the characters, or perhaps just because they like the straightforward style of writing. Some of the titles have been around for a long time, but are chosen over current titles by students in search of stories that present down-to-earth characters in realistic situations. These are not "high-interest, low vocabulary" books; they are books of proven interest to basic English students.

Basic English Reading List

Adler, Carole. Roadside valentine. Macmillan, 1983.

Alexander, Anne. To live a lie. Atheneum, 1975.

Anderson, Mary. Step on a crack. Atheneum, 1981.

Arrick, Fran. Chernowitz. Bradbury, 1981.

Bonham, Frank. Durango Street. Dell, 1965.

Bridgers, Sue Ellen. All together now. Knopf, 1979.

Brooks, Bruce. The moves make the man; a novel. Harper, 1984

Butterworth, W. E. Under the influence. Four Winds, 1979.

Carter, Alden. Up country. Scholastic, 1991.

Cheatham, Karyn. The best way out. Harcourt, 1982.

Childress, Alice. Rainbow Jordan. Avon, 1981.

Coleman, Hila. The amazing Miss Laura. Morrow, 1976.

Crutcher, Chris. Running loose. Greenwillow, 1983.

Daly, Jay. Walls. Dell, 1980.

Duder, Tessa. In lane three, Alex Archer. Bantam, 1991.

Eyerly, Jeannette. Drop-out. Lippincott, 1963.

Eyerly, Jeannette. The girl inside. Berkley, 1968.

First, Julia. I, Rebekah, take you, the Lawrences. Watts, 1981.

Greene, Shep. The boy who drank too much. Viking, 1979.

Guest, Elissa Haden. Over the moon. William Morrow, 1986.

Guy, Rosa. And I heard a bird sing. Dell, 1987.

Guy, Rosa. Edith Jackson. Bantam, 1981.

Hall, Lynn. The solitary. Scribner, 1986.

Hamilton, Virginia. M. C. Higgins, the great. Macmillan,

1974.

Hassler, Jon. Four miles to Pinecone. Frederick Warne, 1977.

Head, Ann. Mr. and Mrs. Bo Jo Jones. Putnam, 1967.

Hinton, S. E. The outsiders. Viking, 1967.

Holland, Isabelle. After the first love. Fawcett, 1983.

Hopper, Nancy. Lies. Dutton, 1984.

Hunt, Irene. The lottery rose. Scribner, 1976.

Hunt, Irene. Up a road slowly. Follett, 1966.

Hunter, Kristin Eggleston. The soul brothers and Sister Lou. Avon, 1968.

Irwin, Hadley. Abby, my love. Atheneum, 1985.

Johnson, Annabel. Count me gone. Simon & Schuster, 1968.

Lifton, Betty Jean. I'm still me. Knopf, 1981.

McKay, Robert. The running back. Harcourt, 1979.

Mazer, Norma Fox. Silver. Avon, 1988.

Moeri, Louise. First the egg. Dutton, 1982.

Myers, Walter Dean. Hoops. Dell, 1981.

Myers, Walter Dean. Motown and Didi; a love story. Viking, 1984.

Myers, Walter Dean. The young landlords. Viking, 1979.

Newton, Suzanne. M. V. Sexton speaking. Fawcett, 1981.

Nostlinger, Christine. Luke and Angela. Harcourt, 1979.

O'Dell, Scott. Island of the blue dolphins. Dell, 1960.

O'Dell, Scott. Kathleen, please come home. Dell, 1978.

Paterson, Katherine. The great Gilly Hopkins. Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978.

Paulsen, Gary. The monument. Delacorte, 1991.

Peck, Richard. Father figure. Viking, 1978.

Peck, Robert. Jo Silver. Pineapple Press, 1985.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth. About David. Delacorte, 1980.

Rawls, Wilson. Where the red fern grows. Bantam, 1961.

Sachs, Marilyn. Almost fifteen. Dutton, 1987.

Sebestyen, Ouida. IOU's. Little, 1982.

Sherburne, Zoa. Too bad about the Haines girl. Morrow, 1967.

Slepian, Jan. The Alfred summer. Macmillan, 1980.

Sorensen, Virginia. Miracles on Maple Hill. Harcourt, 1984.

Speare, Elizabeth. The witch of Blackbird Pond. Dell, 1958.

Williams-Garcia, Rita. Blue tights. Lodestar, 1988.

Wyss, Thelma. Here at the Scenic-Vu Motel. Harper, 1988.

Zindel, Paul. My darling, my hamburger. Harper, 1969.